The Banned A-Bomb Stamp

In November, 1994, the United States Postal Service announced a 1995 stamp program that included as part of its World War II sheetlet a stamp commemorating the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Captioned "Atomic bombs hasten war's end, August 1945", the stamp showed the now-familiar mushroom cloud that dominated the sky over Japan after the bomb was dropped.

Soon after the designs had been announced for this, the fifth and final sheetlet in a five-year series, protests were staged in Japan, and Japanese diplomats pressed American representatives in Japan, as well as American leaders in Washington, D.C., to withdraw the design from the sheetlet.

On December 8, 1994—53 years to the day after America declared war on Japan following the December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor—the Postal Service capitulated to pressure from the White House, and Postmaster General Marvin Runyon announced:

> *"We are changing the design of the stamp because of the importance of U.S.-Japan relations at this critical time in U.S. foreign policy, and because President Clinton conveyed his views that it was appropriate for us to do so."*

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Underscoring the Postal Service's own position, Runyon—a U.S. Army Air Corps veteran—also stated:

> *"As the nation's largest employer of veterans, the Postal Service is very mindful of the feelings of U.S. veterans and their families about the sacrifices they made in World War II and other military conflicts. Many gave their lives for their country, and we will always be grateful for their paying the ultimate price."*

The A-bomb stamp was replaced by one with a photo of President Harry S Truman—who had approved the bombings—as he prepared to announce Japan's surrender.

But the story did not end there, for even as the White House and the Postal Service were attempting to undo the political damage by adding a POW-MIA stamp to the 1995 program, a military veteran was reworking the design. Ex-Marine Gerry Newhouse of Columbus, Ohio, with the aid of Robert Littlehale, also of Columbus, added a B-29 bomber (similar to the Enola Gay that dropped the bomb on Hiroshima) where the 32/USA denomination would have been, and changed the caption to "Atomic bombs end WW II".